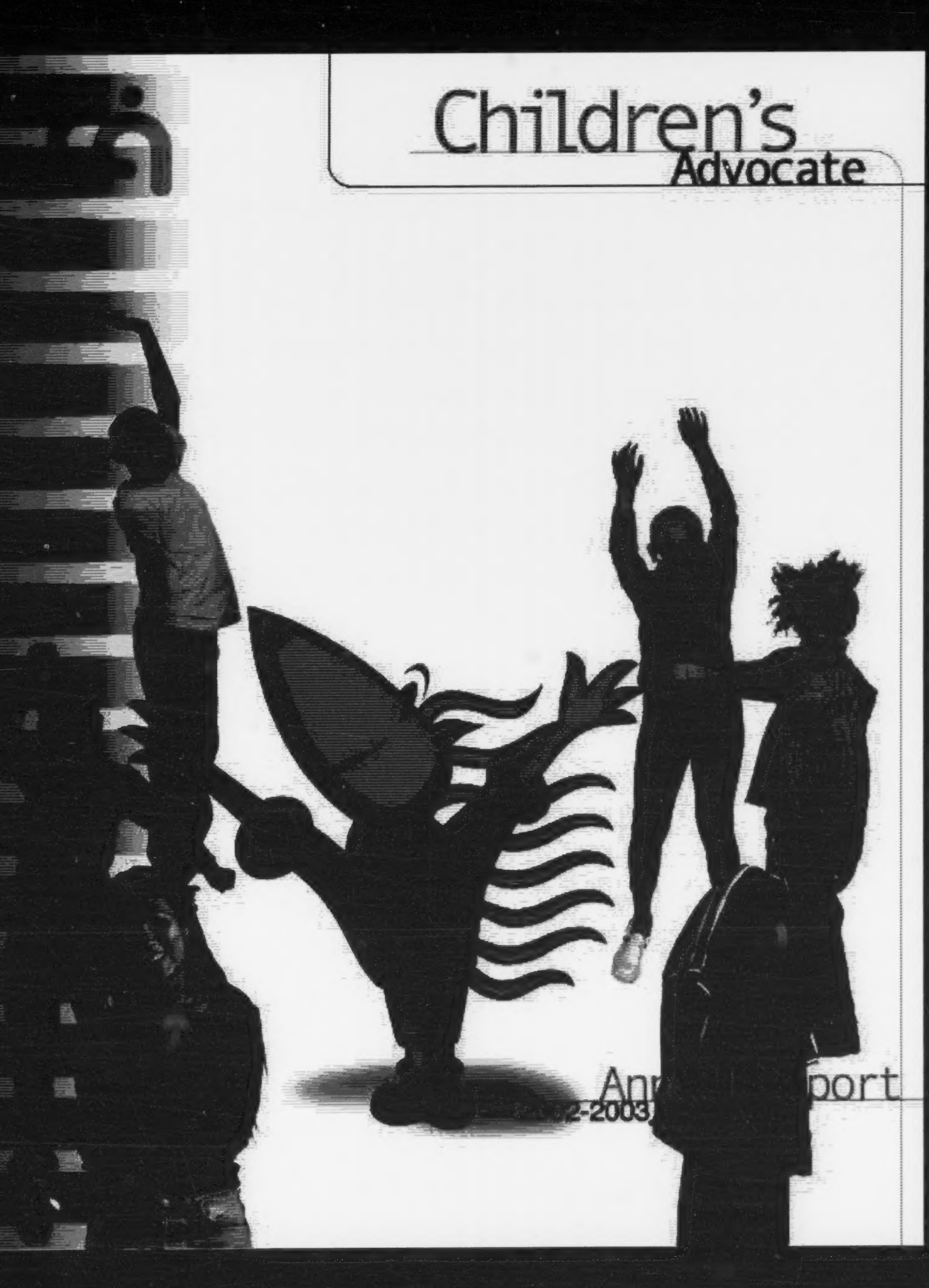
Children's Advocate



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Foreword

The following pages provide an overview of the activities of the Children's Advocate Office for the 2002-2003 fiscal year. Included is an identification of the Program expenditures in relation to the Business Plan goals, as well as our commentary on issues that are of significance to the young people we met who were dependent on the care of the Ministry of Children's Services.

The Children's Advocate reports to the Minister of Children's Services. In 2002-03, the Honourable Iris Evans served as Minister of Children's Services.

I am respectfully submitting this report to the present Minister, the Honourable Heather Forsyth.

John Mould
Children's Advocate

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2002-2003 highlights

The 2001-2002 Children's Advocate Annual Report announced an operational realignment of the Children's Advocate Office (CAO) that was to occur in the 2002-03 fiscal year. This realignment expanded the scope of the CAO. While the core business – advocating with and on behalf of children and youth who receive services under the *Child Welfare Act*, and identifying potential systemic issues – remains the same, the Office re-directed some of its resources toward encouraging and enabling community members to be responsive to the vulnerable children and families that live in their midst. Called our **community advocacy initiative**, its intended outcome is for existing community agencies and resources to include advocacy support as one component of their array of services. These agencies will be encouraged to house and support community volunteers who are willing to be of assistance to other community members (adults, children and youth, families) who are experiencing difficulties. The Office's contribution will be to provide advocacy training to the volunteers, and to provide some program consultation, if that is requested. During the 2002-2003 fiscal year, the two staff members responsible for the community advocacy initiative have devoted their time to developing a training curriculum, and to beginning the process of developing contacts with the network of community service providers in the Province. A primary source has been the Family and Community Support Services structure throughout Alberta.

Our Community Advocacy Initiative's goal is for existing community agencies and resources to include advocacy support in their array of services.

Another major goal of the Office has been to improve the communications between the CAO and the Ministry. Significant effort has been invested in ensuring accurate and timely information is being shared with all elements of Children's Services, and particularly with each Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) and Delegated First Nations Agency (DFNA). During the year the Quarterly Report system has been further developed and refined so that it provides each CFSA and DFNA with current information about the issues that have resulted in children and youth within their area requesting Advocate involvement.

During the year, the CAO established a working relationship with the Youth Secretariat.[1] As two of the funding partners (along with the Ma'Mōwe CFSA for the *Association for Youth In Care – Edmonton*, and Calgary Rockyview for the *Alberta Youth In Care and Custody Network* which is located in Calgary), we created the framework for the funding and working relationships between the funders and the two Associations. Additionally, the Secretariat, through its Director, Mary Jane Graham, agreed to have two Advocates participate as adult supports with its Provincial Youth Advisory Panel and to have the Panel provide consultation to the Children's Advocate Office, as needed.

During the year, there were a number of significant issues raised with the Ministry, stemming from our work with children and youth. These are identified later in this report.

[1] In the Spring of 1999, the Premier announced the formation of a Youth Secretariat to be housed in the Ministry of Children's Services. The purpose of the Youth Secretariat is to identify key themes and to build on existing initiatives and partnerships to provide a mechanism through which issues impacting youth can be identified and addressed. The Chair of the Youth Secretariat is accountable to the Minister of Children's Services.

Restructuring

The Children's Advocate undertook a restructuring of resources and processes to accommodate the community advocacy initiative, a reduction in funding, and recommendations from the Auditor General with regard to planning and reporting.

Resources

Positions

Positions were restructured as follows:

- Management staff was reduced to two positions
- Child Advocate staff was reduced to 13 positions
- Administrative Support staff was reduced to 5 positions
- Two new positions were created for the Community Advocacy initiative
- A portion of each Child Advocate's position was dedicated to the Community Advocacy initiative
- A portion of administrative support staff was committed to the Community Advocacy initiative.

The restructuring of positions resulted in a dedication of 4.4 person years to the Community Advocacy Facilitation initiative. Restructuring also resulted in a net reduction of 3.5 positions.

Budget

Highlights included:

- The Children's Advocate was allocated $1.8 in funding, a reduction of $310,000
- The Children's Advocate absorbed a 4% salary increase
- A total of $85,000 was expended in the startup of the Community Advocacy initiative.

Accommodations

As part of the downsizing and restructuring, the Children's Advocate amalgamated its corporate office and the Northern Regional office in Edmonton.

Planning and reporting

Planning

At the recommendation of the Auditor General, the Children's Advocate implemented a planning process that included the development of a Business Plan and an Operational Work Plan.

Reporting

The Children's Advocate concentrated on improvements in two key areas:

- Providing notification to senior child welfare and Ministry officials of extraordinary case circumstances that are believed to require special attention, and
- Providing information to Child and Family Services Authorities, Delegated First Nations Agencies and Ministry officials about the nature of advocacy issues being handled by Children's Advocates.

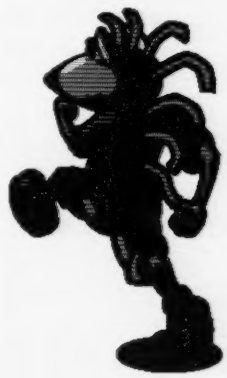
During the year, 16 sensitive case reports were submitted to Ministry officials, and three quarterly reports were distributed to Child and Family Services Authorities and Delegated First Nations Agencies.

The Office also undertook the development of standardized reporting for the Advocates and Community Advocacy Facilitators. This work was completed for implementation in 2003-04.

Website launched

The Children's Advocate launched the "Youth Need to Know" website with a contest for youth and a party held in honour of the young people who participated in developing the site. As a result of the contest, "Spike" became the name of the hedgehog character used on the website and on other communication materials.

The work done by the Youth Advisory Committee helped immensely in the successful development of the look and feel of the site and the information posted there. The youth were congratulated by Minister Evans on their participation and willingness to be involved in an undertaking that will benefit them and many other youth who visit the website.



Contest winners:

Chazlyn	Kristy
Stephen	Sara
Jenn	Lance

Website information for youth

Providing information to youth is fundamental to enabling their participation in forums where decisions are made that will affect their lives, and to their accessing and using mechanisms that allow them to challenge decisions with which they don't agree. The Children's Advocate has developed a website that is intended to inform young people who receive services under the *Child Welfare Act*, and to inform those interested in assisting these young people.

The youth-focused part of the Children's Advocate website was developed in consultation with young people in care who reside in the Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton group homes. This group provided advice on the look and feel of the site and was immensely helpful in identifying content and providing feedback on the written information for the site.

The Children's Advocate developed a website to inform young people receiving services under the Child Welfare Act.

As well, the suggestions of Advocates, based on their day-by-day experience of interacting with children and youth, significantly influenced the site content. Also of great assistance was having access to information published in "the other child welfare manual," produced by the Edmonton Social Planning Council in 1994. While this document is now out of print, we appreciate the Council's consent to the use of the material.

The content of the website covers six areas. They are:

- Your rights
- Know the jargon
- Services refused?
- When you disagree
- What is private?
- Outside Links.

The website address is: **www.gov.ab.ca/advocate,**
and the youth portion of the site is found under: **Youth Need to Know.**

The site is a work in progress. Efforts to keep the information current and relevant are ongoing. New information or ideas are always welcome and can be submitted on the feedback form found at the site.

While we are very happy to be able to provide information to the public in this manner, we are aware that not everyone has access to the Internet. We will continue to develop alternate information tools to assist in informing young people and the public about advocacy services available from this Office.

Systemic issues indicators

In the course of our work with children and youth, we identify instances when it appears that service systems may be failing young people in some way. The term "may" is used intentionally. Our Office interacts with only a percentage of the total number of children and youth who receive Child Welfare services, and we are not able to undertake the work that would be necessary to say conclusively that all young people receiving services have the same experience.

Our process entails gathering sufficient information to be able to clearly identify the issue/problem and to describe how it is affecting children/youth. Once the information gathering is completed, we bring these "systemic issue indicators" to the Ministry's attention. Our request of the Ministry is to respond to the matters identified. If the Ministry disagrees with our observations and concerns, then we are interested in learning what they understand the situation to be and, through the discussion, seek some common ground with respect to the particular concern raised. If the Ministry agrees with an issue that we have raised, then we are interested in knowing how that issue will be addressed.

Reported below are the systemic issue indicators identified during the 2002-2003 reporting year.

Children and youth with complex needs

Child welfare services and programs provided through the CFSA and DFNA service delivery system are, for the most part, able to provide the support and services required by young people who are in out-of-home placements. However, there are some children and youth who have very specialized, and costly, care, educational and health needs because of some mix of extreme behavioural and health/mental health conditions. The greatest challenge for the child welfare worker is locating appropriate and effective living situations. If that challenge is met, then the child welfare worker requires the support and assistance of an array of community and other Ministry (Learning, Health) professionals to help plan how the developmental and educational needs of the young person will be met, and to plan for the future when the youth reaches 18 years, leaves the child welfare system and requires the support of adult services.

As youth get older and more difficult to manage, too often child welfare workers are left on their own to try to find and provide the needed services. In spite of doing the best they can, the task is too great and as a result these youth, who have the highest level of needs among the population of children and youth receiving child welfare services, move from placement to placement, are not provided with the care they require, and are unable to develop their capacity developmentally or educationally.

There is an urgent need to conclude the policy work and implement a more effective approach ... to support child welfare workers and better respond to the needs of children and youth.

Through discussions with the Ministry, we understand that the challenge of meeting the needs of children and youth with complex needs is an issue being addressed by the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI).[2] As a first step, a policy paper is being written to underpin the development of "an integrated, cross-Ministry system of supports and services to optimize the well-being of children and youth with special and complex needs."

Given the Ministry acknowledges that service provision to children and youth with complex needs is a systemic issue, our position has been that there is an urgent need to conclude the policy work and to implement a more effective and comprehensive approach at the service delivery level to support child welfare workers and to better respond to the needs of this population of children and youth.

Face down restraints

The use of face down restraints as a behaviour management technique was brought to the attention of the Children's Advocate in early 2002. A resident of a child welfare group home contacted an Advocate expressing concern about being subjected to face down restraints. Initial research by our office highlighted the inherent danger of using face down restraints as a means of behaviour control. Contact with Advocates in other Canadian provinces reinforced the opinion that these restraints were dangerous and, in fact, had led to the deaths of a number of youths, including two in Ontario within the past three years.

[2] Introduced in 1998, the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) is a collaborative partnership of government ministries working together on issues affecting children and youth.

The Ministry of Children's Services did not have a policy preventing the use of face down restraints. Nor did the Alberta Association of Services to Children and Families (AASCF), the provincial certification body for group and residential care facilities, have a standard that would preclude use of this method of behaviour management. With this in mind, the Advocate's office approached the Ministry and provided information outlining the dangers associated with face down restraints. It was our recommendation that the use of such restraints be banned from all child welfare facilities.

It was our recommendation that the use of face down restraints be banned from all child welfare facilities.

Subsequent to receiving our information, the Assistant Deputy Minister (Accountability and Program Support) referred the matter to the AASCF for consideration and standards development. At the same time, the information was forwarded to all Chief Executive Officers of the Child and Family Services Authorities and Directors of the Delegated First Nations Agencies alerting them to the concerns and dangers associated with face down restraints. The Ministry continues to work at the development of a standard that explicitly prohibits the use of face down restraints. Until such time as the standard is developed, the Ministry has made it clear in correspondence to all CEOs and Directors of First Nations Agencies that the use of face down restraints is not permitted.

While the Advocate's office continues to receive complaints concerning the use of restraints, we understand the Ministry's Service Quality Branch is monitoring the practice and is attempting to ensure compliance to the prohibition on the use of face down restraints.

Youth in transition

All children and youth experience transitions in their lives. Typical transition periods include a child leaving home for the first time to attend kindergarten, a young teen's first foray into the job market, and young adults' experiences as they establish their own living spaces separate from the parental home. As youth go through these transitions, parents and siblings, and others involved in the youth's life, normally provide the required support.

Youth in care, who have the least available natural support, often face expectations ... beyond what is expected of their peers who are living with their own families.

Transitional challenges for young people receiving child welfare services are similar to those faced by all youth, but can be much more daunting because of breaks in the relationships with their natural support systems. At times, especially for teens, the young people must face and deal with transitions on their own. It is our experience that youth in care, who have the least available natural support, often face expectations for school success, for finding and maintaining employment, and for achieving independence beyond what is expected of their peers who are living within their own families and who have access to much greater levels of financial and emotional support.

As youth transition from Ministry services to more independence and/or other service systems, it is our belief the Ministry must be prepared to provide the supports and assistance that is necessary for success. In some cases it may require transitional supports beyond the youth's 18th birthday. In other cases, assistance in bridging service systems is required. Still other youth may require the Ministry to provide financial resources that would allow them to complete their education.

Transitional supports

Similar to youth leaving their natural families, youth in care often require supports beyond their 18th birthday. Youth removed from natural care-providers, who have experienced multiple moves, numerous child welfare workers and many shifts in their case plans, are frequently unable to deal with the transition from a more structured environment where adults guide or decide, to one where everything is in their hands. Youth may find, after an extended period of time in care, that they are unprepared for independence, not because they lack the knowledge and skills associated with independence, but because they feel abandoned and alone. These youth continue to struggle with issues associated to why they were in care in the first place and/or with what happened to them while in care; with incomplete mastery of the tasks of adolescence; and, with the whole new set of expectations associated with adulthood. The burden is greatest for young adults who have no natural or substitute family relationships to call on.

Young people who, at age 18, are receiving child welfare services in their own right (under temporary or permanent guardianship orders, or through a custody or support agreement with themselves rather than with their parents), can ask to enter into a contract with a Director for a further period of services. These contracts are called "extensions of care and maintenance." Generally, the extensions are available to youth who need personal and financial support to complete high school. They are usually short term (three months is an average) and while the extensions are renewable, they are no longer available once the young adult reaches the age of 20.

While the young people we meet are very grateful to have access to extensions of care and maintenance, this help comes with a price. Because the extensions are short term, there is always the worry there will not be a further extension. The latter worry is exacerbated for these youth when they are repeatedly questioned about whether they really need the extension – that it appears they only need/want financial assistance and that that need could be met elsewhere. Ironically, the more success young people experience in the management of their personal circumstances, the greater the pressure for them to terminate their contact with Children's Services, which would also terminate the personal support services provided through the contract. The system response to their success is the threat of loss. One youth said this felt like her family was constantly packing her suitcase, putting it on the front door step, and inviting her to leave.

Our feedback to the Ministry is that the transitional planning processes within the Authorities are not working effectively for many youth, and that the service approaches used are often counterproductive. Our suggestions are that regulation and policy be altered to encourage and enable provision of supports to assist youth with their transition to independence, assuring them of assistance with medical/dental/optical coverage and living expenses while they complete post-secondary education or specific job training that will give them reasonable access to the job market.

Our feedback to the Ministry is that the transitional planning processes within the Authorities are not working effectively for many youth and that the service approaches used are often counterproductive.

Bridging service systems

The Children's Advocate office has been involved with many youth who require services from various adult service systems – for example, Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD), and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) – once they reach the age of majority. This transition is often prolonged and problematic for the youth.

In some instances, adult services are unavailable. Youth attempting to access Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) services have greater difficulty in the later part of the fiscal year as budget dollars become scarce. First Nations youth who live on reserve are unable to access PDD services. There are also systemic barriers that impede the smooth transition from child welfare to support through Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). A youth with life-long, significant disabilities must go through further assessments when applying for AISH, and cannot have the assessments completed until he or she has reached the age of 18. This delays the receipt of adult services, sometimes for many months.

The Ministry acknowledges the inadequacies in these transitional processes and is working with the adult service systems to find solutions.

School completion

Our view is that youth would benefit greatly from a significant increase in the investment of the Ministry of Children's Services in ensuring their success in school.

Our experience is that school completion is one of the most important factors related to the successful transition of young people to adulthood. Yet, school success eludes many young people who are in care. Recent research undertaken by the Office for Children and Youth, Province of British Columbia ("Educational Attainment of Children in Care")[3] concluded that, "...academic performance among [children in care] is consistently lower than in the general population of students. This finding occurs across all grades studied and across all subject categories." While similar research has not been conducted in Alberta, we have no reason to believe the situation is different here. Our view is that youth would benefit greatly from a significant increase in the investment of the Ministry of Children's Services in ensuring their success in school, and in doing what is reasonably possible to ensure that those

[3] This study is available on the Office for Children and Youth website at http://www.gov.bc.ca/officeforchildrenandyouth.

youth who grew up in care complete some form of post-secondary training or education so they have more ready access to the job market.

Youth who grow up in care and want to pursue post-secondary education must seek financial support through Student Finance. They are unable to rely on natural family to meet any of their basic needs and even with the maximum amount of financial help from Student Finance, most have to work while attending school to make ends meet. If they manage all this and successfully graduate, their immediate reward is a substantial debt load. Given all of the obstacles that youth in care must overcome to complete secondary school and have sufficient academic achievement to be accepted for post-secondary study, it is reasonable to expect the Ministry, as their past guardian, to play a role in financially supporting their continued educational success.

Permanency planning

Permanency planning has been a difficult issue for Children's Services, as it has been for all similar jurisdictions across Canada. First identified in the 1990-1991 Children's Advocate Annual Report, the fact that these children and youth, having been removed from their birth family, are not assured of long-term, stable living environments within which to develop has been consistently raised as an issue by this office. It was highlighted as a significant issue in the 1997-1998 Annual Report and yet remains an issue for the Advocate five years later in this, the 2002-2003 Annual Report.

The promise of the "Forever Homes" initiative, introduced in the 1997-1998 reporting year, has not been achieved. Children and youth continue to languish in temporary placements, and with temporary status when there is no reasonable possibility they will be returned to the care of their families.

Permanency planning is integral to good case practice, considers a number of options when dealing with children and youth, and does so while safeguarding a child's need for continuity in relationships. Planning and the subsequent decision-making must reflect the child's sense of time and permanence rather than the adult's, and must recognize the importance of the bond that develops over time between child and care provider. As identified in the past, without a strongly enunciated and supported process aimed at expediting the decision making involved in

planning a youth's future "many children remain in limbo" (1997-1998, CAO Annual Report, p. 21). It is not enough to merely develop initiatives, policies and procedures. Aggressive efforts and support must follow to ensure that children/youth are not only safe but also that appropriate planning and decision-making takes place to secure their futures. As guardian to these children/youth, the Director of Child Welfare has a responsibility to ensure appropriate and timely casework decisions are made, that long-term permanent placements are secured for these young people.

We believe there is an over-reliance on adoption as the preferred outcome of permanency planning and strongly encourage current activities within the Ministry to expand the number of permanency options for children and youth in care.

First nations youth and permanency planning

The failure of permanency planning is most prevalent with First Nations children and youth. There are a number of factors that impact planning and placement options:

- Ministry policy requires that legal adoption of a First Nations child must have the consent of Chief and Council of the child's Band. It is our experience that consent is rarely given, which removes the primary permanency option used by the Ministry
- Legal adoption is never going to be a permanency-planning alternative that will be supported by First Nations people. Children are seen as a gift of the Creator and only on loan to the parents. The idea that the relationship between the child and parents can be eliminated by a man-made piece of paper is against natural law. Equally distasteful is that legal adoption entails altering of birth records and change of name, which constitutes a denial of the child's birth heritage and relationships
- The Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency has successfully developed and implemented custom adoption as an alternative to legal adoption for their children and youth who are in permanent care. However, no other First Nations Agency in the Province has chosen to pursue development of this alternative for their children
- There are not enough Aboriginal placement resources for the Aboriginal children and youth in care, and there won't be in the foreseeable future. Placement of Aboriginal children in non-Aboriginal homes on a long-term basis has been, and is, problematic from every perspective. A core issue is the lack of relationship – the lack of knowing,

understanding, appreciating, respecting – between Aboriginal peoples and other people in the Province. Without relationship, Aboriginal young people who grow up in non-Aboriginal homes have no opportunity to develop rootedness in their own history and culture and are subject to all the biases and prejudices that are part of an environment that has a stereotypical view of Aboriginal people. From another perspective, Aboriginal children and youth have become the pawns in power and control struggles associated with First Nations' assertion of their rights and their struggle for self-government. From this perspective, the dominant theme is return of young people to their communities of heritage, regardless of the attachments these children have with their current caregivers.

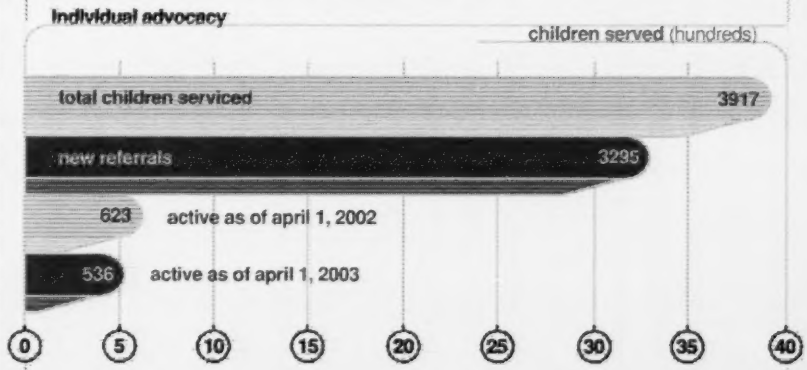
It is an understatement to say this is an environment that is not conducive to permanency planning for Aboriginal children and youth, who constitute a significant proportion of the population of young people who are in permanent care. Finding effective solutions to these barriers constitutes the single biggest challenge facing the Ministry with respect to attaining its goal of permanence for children and youth for whom the Government is sole legal guardian.

It is an understatement to say this is an environment that is not conducive to permanency planning for Aboriginal children and youth ...

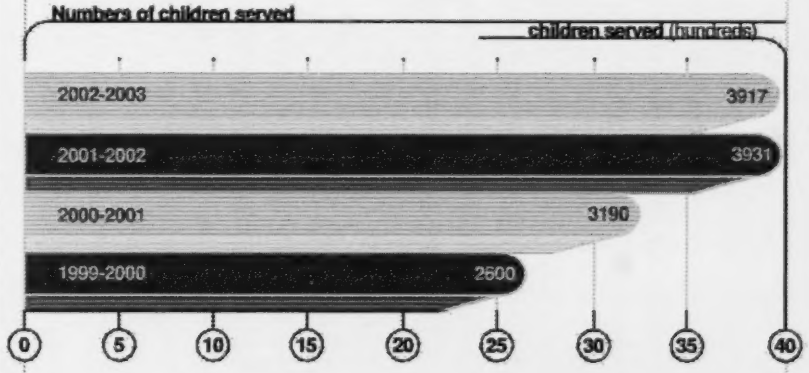
Individual advocacy

During 2002-2003, staff of the Children's Advocate office were under pressure to respond to steady demands for services to individual children.

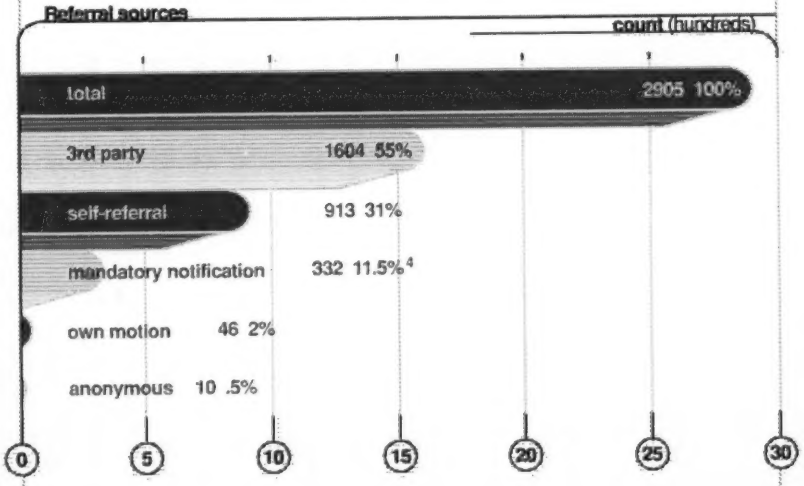
In 2002-2003, Children's Advocate staff served 3,917 children and youth. New referrals to the program increased during this year. For fiscal year 2001-2002 we reported 3,224 new referrals, but the chart below shows that in 2002-2003 new referrals totalled 3,295.



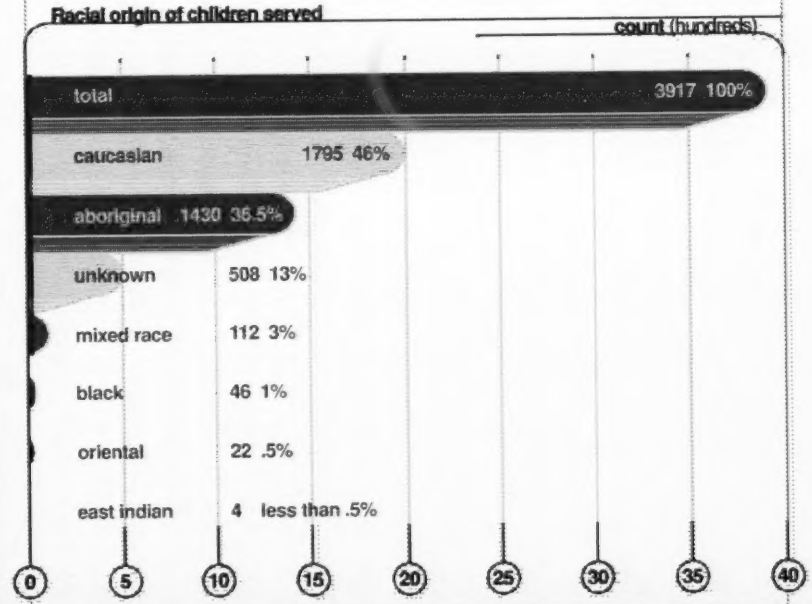
The following shows service figures for the reporting year compared to the three years preceding.



Children and youth were referred to program services from a variety of sources. Over half were from 3rd parties – most from Child Welfare workers and individuals caring for the young person.



Almost half of the 3,917 children served were described as Caucasian in origin, and over one-third were of Aboriginal origin.



[4] Mandatory notifications are those required by the Child Welfare Act to report certain circumstances such as Child Abuse, referrals originate from the Edmonton Advocate office.

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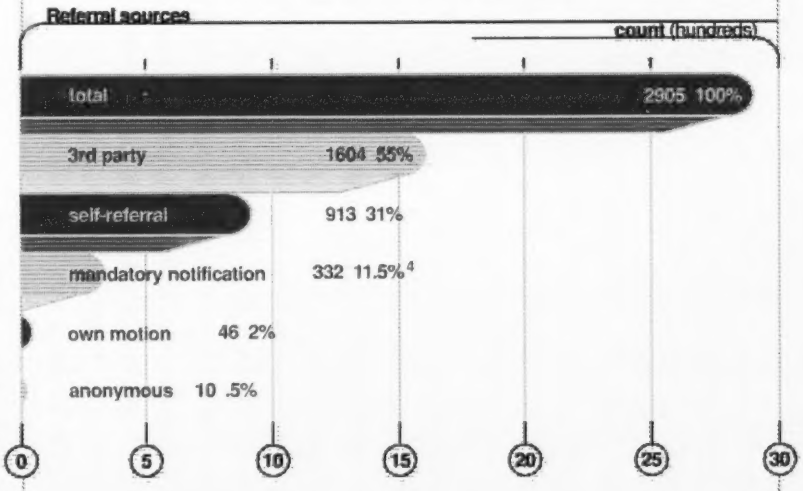

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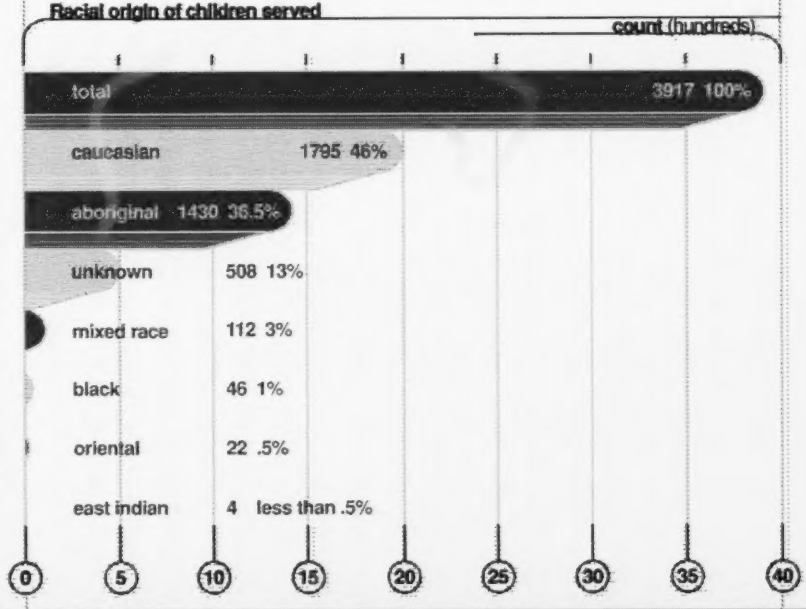
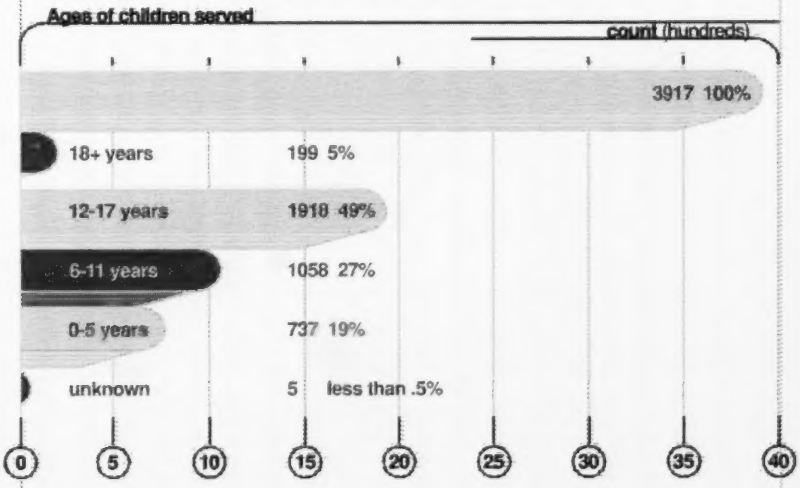


[4] Mandatory notification is a policy requirement for Child Welfare workers when certain circumstances exist. Own Motion intervals originate in the Children's Advocate office.

Thirteen professional staff provided services from two locations: an Edmonton office serving residents of Edmonton and northern Alberta, and a Calgary office serving the central and southern areas of the Province.

As the information below shows, young people between the ages of 12 and 17 formed the major part of the program's workload.



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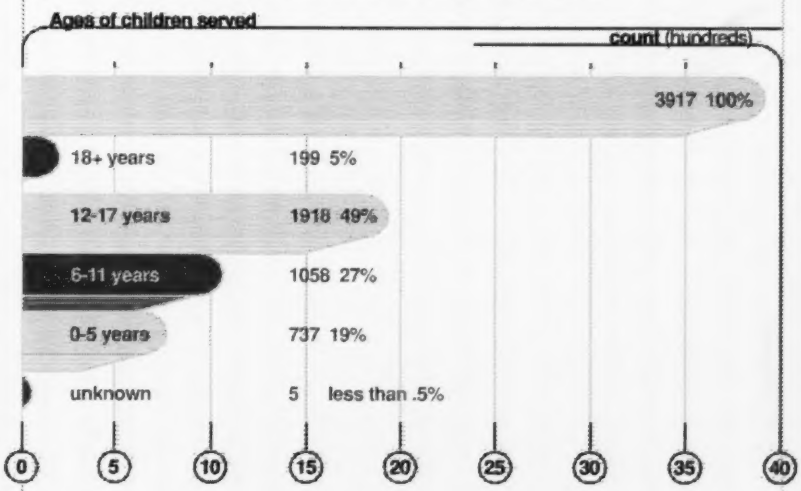
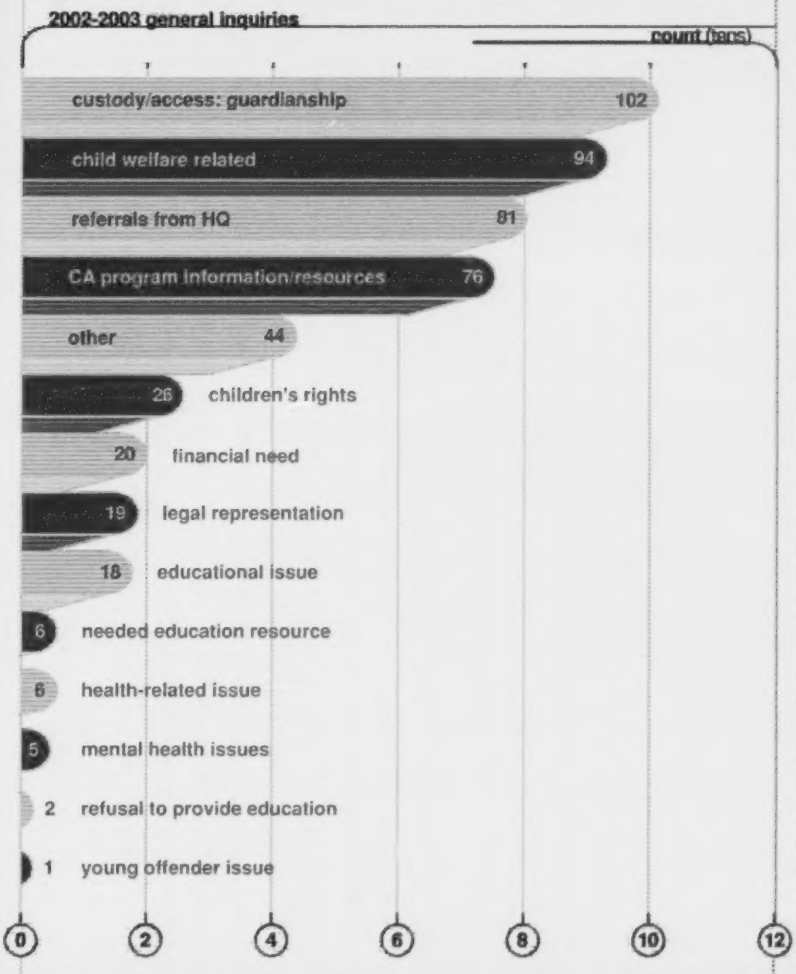


General inquiries

Notable are the number of calls concerning custody and access issues. Over the years, this is the area of concern that has been brought to our attention most frequently.

Our office receives many calls (most from adults) with problems falling outside the Office's scope and mandate. We track each of these calls in relation to a number of set themes: education, financial assistance, custody and access, and so on. This gives us a picture of the type and frequency of difficulties the callers experience with various human service systems and/or with the dissolution of a relationship that involves children. The following breaks out the 500 general inquiries received during 2002-2003.



Appendix A - Section 2 of the Child Welfare Act

Matters to be considered

A Court and all persons shall exercise any authority or make any decision relating to a child who is in need of protective services under this Act in the best interests of the child and in doing so shall consider the following as well as any other relevant matter:

(a) the family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved;
(b) the interests of a child should be recognized and protected;
(c) the family has the right to the least invasion of its privacy and interference with its freedom that is compatible with its own interest, the interest of the individual family members and society;
(d) a child, if the child is capable of forming an opinion, is entitled to an opportunity to express that opinion on matters affecting the child and the child's opinion should be considered by those making decisions that affect the child;
(e) the family is responsible for the care and supervision of its children and every child should have an opportunity to be a wanted and valued member of a family, and to that end
  (i) if protective services are necessary to assist the family in providing for the care of a child, those services should be supplied to the family in so far as it is reasonably practicable to do so in order to support the family unit and to prevent the need to remove the child from the family, and
  (ii) a child should be removed from the family only when other less intrusive measures are not sufficient to protect the survival, security, or development of the child;
(f) any decision concerning the removal of a child from the child's family should take into account
  (i) the benefits to the child of maintaining, wherever possible, the child's familial, cultural, social and religious heritage,
  (ii) the benefits to the child of stability and continuity of care and relationships,
  (iii) the risks to the child if the child remains with the family, is removed from the family or is returned to the family, and
  (iv) the merits of allowing the child to remain with the family compared to the merits of removing the child from the family;

(g) if it is not inconsistent with the protection of a child who may be in need of protective services, the child's family should be referred to community resources for services that would support and preserve the family and prevent the need for any other intervention under this Act;

(h) any decision concerning the placement of a child outside the child's family should take into account

(i) the benefits to the child of a placement that respects the child's familial, cultural, social and religious heritage,

(ii) the benefits to the child of stability and continuity of care and relationships,

(iii) the benefits to the child of a placement within or as close as possible to the child's home community,

(iv) the mental, emotional and physical needs of the child and the child's mental, emotional and physical stage of development, and

(v) whether or not the proposed placement is suitable for the child;

(i) the provision of protective services is intended to remedy or alleviate the condition that caused the child to be in need of protective services;

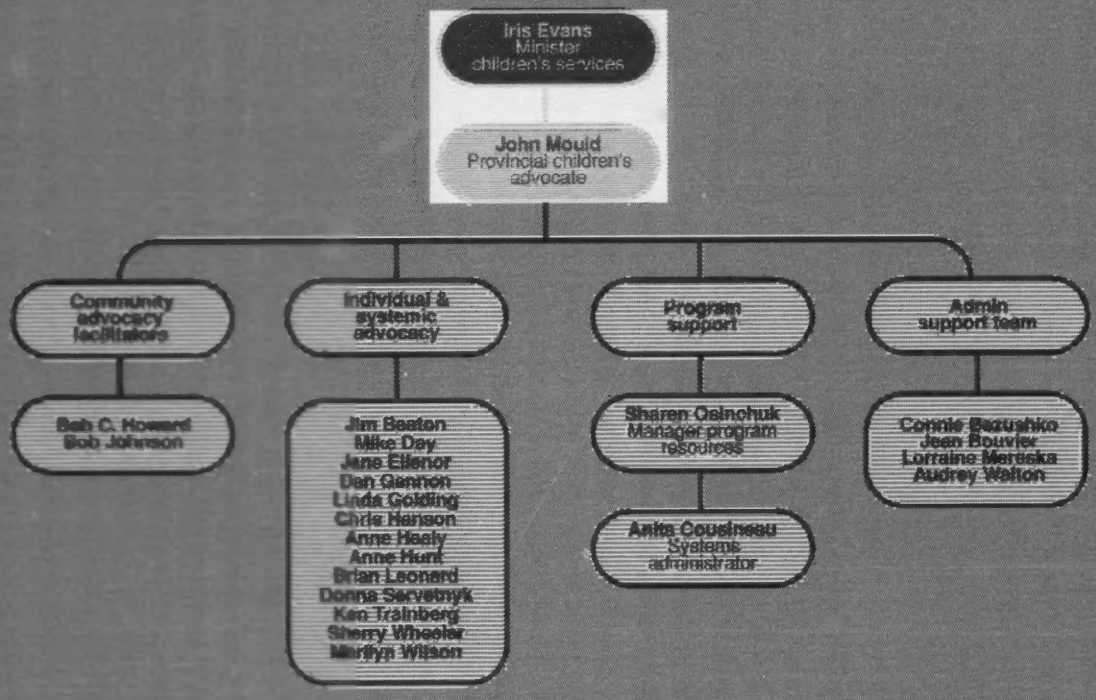
(j) if a child is being provided with care under this Act, the child should be provided with a level of care that is adequate to meet the needs of the child and consistent with community standards and available resources;

(k) if a child is being provided with care under this Act, a plan for the care of a child should be developed that will address the child's need for stability and continuity of care and relationships;

(l) a person who assumes responsibility for the care of a child under this Act should endeavour to make the child aware of the child's familial, cultural, social and religious heritage;

(m) there should be no unreasonable delay in making or implementing a decision affecting a child.

Appendix B - Organizational chart
2002-2003 fiscal year



Alberta
CHILDREN'S SERVICES